

JAMES HARWELL'S TESTIMONY
US HOUSE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 7, 2006

Thank you, Chairman Goodlatte, Congressman Peterson, and members of the House Agriculture Committee for the opportunity to present testimony on behalf of Alabama's Green Industry. For 35 years I have been the owner of three retail garden centers in Montgomery, Alabama. My business included landscape, greenhouse and growing divisions. I have served a number of leadership positions in Alabama's Green Industry. I am the Past President and Interim Executive Director of the Alabama Nursery and Landscape Association.

ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDY
OF THE ALABAMA GREEN INDUSTRY

The Green Industry in Alabama is a bright spot in agriculture. In 2003, a comprehensive project began at Auburn University to evaluate, for the first time, the total economic impact of the Green Industry in Alabama. The project evaluated the economic contribution of the wholesale nursery and greenhouse industry, turf grass industry, horticultural goods retailing, landscape design, construction and maintenance services, as well as other public and private institutions that are major consumers of Green Industry goods and services. The aesthetic value and environmental improvement aspect of our industry is recognized daily; however, this study is the first effort to quantify the economic value of the industry.

The results of this survey show:

- The Alabama Green Industry accounts for 38% of all crops produced in the state and are the state's fastest growing agricultural sector over the past two decades.
- Alabama is ranked 3rd in the nation in turfgrass and sod production.
- Alabama is 16th in the nation in nursery and greenhouse production.
- The Green Industry in Alabama boasts over \$2.1 billion in total sales, with \$1.91 billion in total economic impact.
- The Alabama Green Industry accounts for \$1.5 billion in value added impact, \$269 million in indirect business taxes, and \$625 million in net exports (net products leaving the state).

Unlike many other crops, most of the value added to Green Industry products occurs within the state. In addition to the dollar impact, Alabama's Green Industry is responsible for providing approximately 31,000 jobs with some 2,600 businesses involved in production, service, and retail sales.

The industry has a significant impact in each congressional district of the state ranging from \$123 million in Congressional District Seven to nearly \$400 million in District One. This study shows the significance of the Green Industry in Alabama and establishes a benchmark by which future growth and progress can be monitored and evaluated.

Last year Alabama's third largest farm commodity was greenhouse, nursery, and sod products. These producers represent the fastest growing segment of the state's agriculture industry, but do not receive, nor are they asking for, traditional subsidies.

RESEARCH FUNDING (Education)

The continued support of the nursery, greenhouse and sod Industry research should be a substantial part of the upcoming Farm Bill. Alabama is fortunate to have three land-grant universities and their continued support for agriculture research is a key component for the future viability and growth of these Green Industry groups.

HURRICANE RELIEF

The nursery, greenhouse and sod industry in Mobile and Baldwin Counties suffered tremendous losses due to hurricanes over the last two years. As you know, the FY 06 Defense Appropriations Bill included funding for hurricane-stricken states and a statutory change was made so that specialty crop producers could now be eligible for the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP). These funds will be used for clean-up of nursery, shadehouse and greenhouse debris as well as above-ground irrigation structures. We appreciate Congress' willingness to address this problem, but further help is needed.

For example, the Tree Assistance Program or TAP provides cost-share assistance to orchardists and was funded in the Military Construction and Hurricane Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2005 to authorize assistance for producers of eligible trees, bushes, vines, and forest land. An "eligible orchardist", defined as a commercial grower of fruit-bearing trees and bushes qualifies for assistance. A nursery grower, who produces ornamental field or container grown trees and bushes, is not. In other words, the grower whose final product is the pecan is covered. The grower whose final product is the pecan tree is not covered. While technically, growers of ornamental trees and shrubs do not produce an edible crop, the value of

our products extends far beyond the dinner table. The use of our products in gardening provides low-impact exercise for everyone from toddlers to senior citizens. Properly placed, our products help reduce power bills in American homes and businesses. And, included in the renaissance of American city centers, our products help reduce the crime rate and give neighborhoods a renewed sense of pride. Businesses in areas in which our products are properly used and maintained see an increase in traffic and revenue. That translates into higher sales, increased job creation, and tax revenues at the local, state and federal level.

We ask that the TAP include commercially grown ornamental trees and plants, whether field or container-grown, because these crops are commercial legitimate agricultural commodities. After hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the damage to the Alabama producers of the products just discussed was substantial (\$25 million) and yet because the way the TAP program is currently written, these producers received little or no help.

CONCLUSION

We call our state "Alabama the Beautiful". Our industry is one of the reasons why. As a significant member of the agricultural community, the green industry would ask to receive equal recognition and assistance in disaster relief as other affected agricultural commodities.

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Work Experience:

Alabama Nursery and Landscape Association

- Auburn, Alabama; September 2005- Present
- Interim Executive Director Job
- Director of the Gulf States Horticulture Expo Tradeshow February 2-4, 2006
- Represents the Green Industry in Alabama at various meetings for the state level
- Day to day operations of the state association
- Helped coordinate statewide hurricane relief efforts to the nursery industry

Harwell's Green Thumb Nursery

- Montgomery and Wetumpka, Alabama; March 1972-August 2005
- Owner and Operator of 3 garden centers/landscape services
and one greenhouse growing operation
- Managed 50+ employees
- Financial management of multimillion dollar corporation
- Ordered and maintained inventory of both hard goods and green goods
- Greenhouse operation included propagating and growing bedding plants, maintenance
- Designed and installed landscapes and irrigation

Education:

- Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama; BS 1972 in Ornamental Horticulture

Achievements and Activities:

- 2005 President of Alabama Nursery and Landscape Association
- Past Alabama Governor of American Nursery and Landscape Association
- State of Alabama Certifications: Nursery; Landscape; and Pesticide
- Auburn University College of Agriculture Dean Advisory Council
- Auburn University Search Committee for Head of the Department of Horticulture

Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
Information Required From Non-governmental Witnesses

House rules require non-governmental witnesses to provide their resume or biographical sketch prior to testifying. If you do not have a resume or biographical sketch available, please complete this form.

1. Name: B. James Harwell
2. Business Address: 425 West Sanford Ave.
Auburn, AL
3. Business Phone Number: 334-821-5148
4. Organization you represent: Alabama Nursery and Landscape Association
5. Please list any occupational, employment, or work-related experience you have which add to your qualification to provide testimony before the Committee:
30 years as a owner/operator of three
Garden centers
6. Please list any special training, education, or professional experience you have which add to your qualifications to provide testimony before the Committee:
BS ornamental Horticulture
Auburn University
7. If you are appearing on behalf of an organization, please list the capacity in which you are representing that organization, including any offices or elected positions you hold:
Recent Past President of ALNLA
Exec. Director of ALNLA

Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
Required Witness Disclosure Form

House Rules* require nongovernmental witnesses to disclose the amount and source of Federal grants received since October 1, 2004.

Name: B. James Harwell
Address: 715 Jasmine Hill Road Wetumpka, AL 36093
Telephone: 334-567-8500
Organization you represent (if any): Alabama Nursery and
landscape Association

1. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) you have received since October 1, 2004, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract. House Rules do **NOT** require disclosure of federal payments to individuals, such as Social Security or Medicare benefits, farm program payments, or assistance to agricultural producers:

Source: _____ Amount: _____

Source: _____ Amount: _____

2. If you are appearing on behalf of an organization, please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) the organization has received since October 1, 2004, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract:

Source: Risk Management Amount: 12,789.00

Source: _____ Amount: _____

Please check here if this form is NOT applicable to you: _____

Signature: B. James Harwell

* Rule XI, clause 2(g)(4) of the U.S. House of Representatives provides: Each committee shall, to the greatest extent practicable, require witnesses who appear before it to submit in advance written statements of proposed testimony and to limit their initial presentations to the committee to brief summaries thereof. In the case of a witness appearing in a nongovernmental capacity, a written statement of proposed testimony shall include a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source (by agency and program) of each Federal grant (or subgrant thereof) or contract (or subcontract thereof) received during the current fiscal year or either of the two previous fiscal years by the witness or by any entity represented by the witness.

PLEASE ATTACH DISCLOSURE FORM TO EACH COPY OF TESTIMONY.